

# REIMAGINING COMMUNITY SAFETY

Riverside County



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With a mix of audacity, analysis, and action, we foster justice and create equitable futures for everyone in our state. We translate complex ideas about communities into narratives that inspire action with the racial equity movement. To achieve our vision of a world where justice thrives, we uphold the truth through deep research, turn policies into actionable change, and shift money and power back into our communities.

We are a catalyst for systems transformation, ensuring that community-driven action, research, and policy foster an equitable future. We are willing to venture into the unknown for a cause, because to get to where we need to go, we need to do things in ways we have never done before.

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The ACLU SoCal is committed to helping re-envision an approach to public safety that is fair and free of racial bias, keeps communities safe and respects the dignity and rights of all who come into contact with it. We strive to end overcriminalization; ensure fair and constitutionally sound treatment of all people; remove barriers to reentry; and increase government transparency and accountability. The ACLU SoCal works with community and organizational partners to reform California's community safety approaches to end harsh policies that result in mass incarceration; achieve effective community-based solutions and opportunities; and prioritize rehabilitation and transformative justice over punishment.



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**Continuing to fund policing practices that are demonstrably harmful and ineffective rather than investing in empowering and solution-oriented social interventions undermines, rather than contributes to, our collective wellbeing.**

# I. INTRODUCTION

Communities are safe when every person is healthy, secure, and supported. Riverside County’s budget, which, in many ways, is a statement of what it most values—does not reflect this fundamental truth. Rather, the County fails to sufficiently invest resources in programs that advance those interests and instead allocates an overwhelming amount of money to the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department (“RCSD” or the “Department”). In so doing, the County underwrites practices that harm people of color and undermine community safety.

RCSD’s patrol unit spends 87.6% of the hours they spend stopping members of the public on deputy-initiated stops for traffic violations—not, as one might think, responding to the public’s requests for service.<sup>1</sup> Those stops rarely result in deputies recovering evidence of a crime or in arrests for serious crimes. To the contrary, out of all of RCSD’s 58,292 stops in 2019, only 3.6% led to an arrest.<sup>2</sup> What *often* occurs is harassment and physical injury; documented emotional and psychological harm for both the individual and communities where these stops are concentrated; and significant costs to the County (and, in turn, its residents) even beyond the enormous dollar amounts reflected in the Sheriff’s budget.

Riverside County’s approach to public safety is wasteful because it directs resources away from policies that have been shown to improve community safety—such as investments in transportation, healthcare, and housing. It is also harmful because policing materially worsens financial and social outcomes for Riverside County residents and the overall public health of the County. This harm is not equally distributed but is rather concentrated in communities of color, especially Black and Latine<sup>3</sup> communities. As Attorney General Rob Bonta noted when announcing a civil rights investigation into RCSD in 2023:

**“When some communities don’t see or feel they are being treated equitably by law enforcement, it contributes to distrust and hurts public safety. Unfortunately, it is clear that — amid concerning levels of in-custody deaths and allegations of misconduct — too many families and communities in Riverside County are hurting and looking for answers.”<sup>4</sup>**

Continuing to fund policing practices that are demonstrably harmful and ineffective rather than investing in empowering and solution-oriented social interventions undermines, rather than contributes to, our collective wellbeing.

## RCSD

Riverside County Sheriff’s Department

## LATINE

A gender-inclusive term used in this report to replace the terms “Latina(s),” “Latino(s),” “Latinx(s),” and “Hispanic.”

This report builds upon [\*Reimagining Community Safety in California: From Deadly and Expensive Sheriffs to Equity and Care-Centered Wellbeing\*](#), a joint publication by the ACLU SoCal and Catalyst California. *Reimagining Community Safety* analyzed self-reported stop data<sup>5</sup> from California law enforcement agencies, publicly available budget information, stories from community-based organizations, and public policy research.<sup>6</sup>

It found that the patrol practices of Sheriffs' departments across the state waste public dollars, devastate people of color, and undermine community safety.<sup>7</sup> This report takes a closer look at those issues specifically for RCSD. It encourages the County to respond to real community needs by changing its funding priorities and allocating County funds to the policies and programs that allow County residents to thrive.

## **STOP**

An interaction in which a deputy detains an individual such that they are not free to leave, or conducts a search.

## The County's Investment in RCSD Does Not Further Community Safety

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department says that it contributes to public safety through "the suppression and prevention of crime, and the reduction of criminal recidivism."<sup>8</sup> This is clearly false.

First, RCSD fails at "suppress[ing],"<sup>9</sup> or solving, crime because it spends the vast majority of its deputies' time—87.6%—on officer-initiated contact, not on responding to the public's calls for help. When the agency *does* respond to the public's calls for service, its actions are ineffective by its own standards. Clearance rates, for example, measure the difference between the number of crimes a law enforcement agency reports within its jurisdiction and the number of cases resolved through an arrest or other means. In 2020, of 932 violent crimes reported to the California Department of Justice, RCSD cleared just 359, or 38.5%. Of 37 rapes reported to the California Department of Justice, RCSD cleared only four, totaling just 10.81%. RCSD's clearance record for property crime is even worse: the department cleared just 3.56% of property crimes, including 7.19% of vehicle thefts and just 2.26% of larceny thefts.<sup>10</sup> Thus, even as it fails to effectively respond to incidents that have a more direct relationship to overall community safety, it spends thousands of deputy hours policing traffic.

Second, RCSD's focus on crime "prevention"<sup>11</sup> through "proactive" policing—forcing encounters with the public to uncover criminal activity—is similarly ineffective. Ninety-two percent of officer stops, totaling 83.7% of officer time, concern traffic violations. In Riverside, only 2.7% of stops (7.8% of officer time) is devoted to interactions where officers allegedly suspect ongoing or past criminal conduct.<sup>12</sup> Rather than helping the public, as will be discussed below, proactive policing causes psychological harm both to individuals stopped and to the communities RCSD polices most aggressively.

Finally, RCSD's practices run counter to empirically proven methods for "reduc[ing] criminal recidivism."<sup>13</sup> The Riverside County Board of Supervisors funds RCSD at extraordinary rates. In Fiscal Year 2020, Riverside County allocated \$795,311,294 of its \$6.7 billion budget—more than 11%—to RCSD.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the County appropriated \$88,611,984, or less than 1.5%, to Housing, Homelessness Prevention, and Workforce Solutions.<sup>15</sup> Because of RCSD's outsized share of the budget, its practices extract resources from the community, detract from the policies and programs proven to keep people safe, and are *more likely to increase* participation in crime.<sup>16</sup>

The Sheriff’s narrative on public safety enshrines racism as a tolerable byproduct of policing. It ignores both the substantial harm incurred by people subject to policing—including direct physical injury resulting from police uses of force and consequences that arise from being stopped or arrested. These consequences include the well-documented physical and mental health impacts experienced by the individual stopped as well as by those experienced by members of communities where such stops are prevalent, economic harms like lost wages, and other personal costs like loss of child custody or impairment of immigration status.<sup>17</sup> Many of these harms are most likely to be experienced by people of color,<sup>18</sup> and the Black community in particular. These communities—which are often most impacted by crime and violence—also suffer the most from the County’s decision to invest in police rather than funding both proven and innovative solutions to improve community safety.

The Sheriff’s narrative also ignores the tremendous financial costs incurred by the government after police intervene, whether or not a stop results in prosecution. This includes time and money expended by other County agencies such as the District Attorney’s and Public Defender’s offices, court salaries, the cost of jail and prison beds, and funds spent because of lawsuits filed against the County arising out of RCSD misconduct. The County must consider *all* of the costs—both human and economic—as it decides how to spend its finite funds to best serve its residents.

#### PEOPLE OF COLOR (POC)

This term specifically encompasses those identified as: Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino(a), Middle Eastern or South Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander.

## II. ANALYSIS

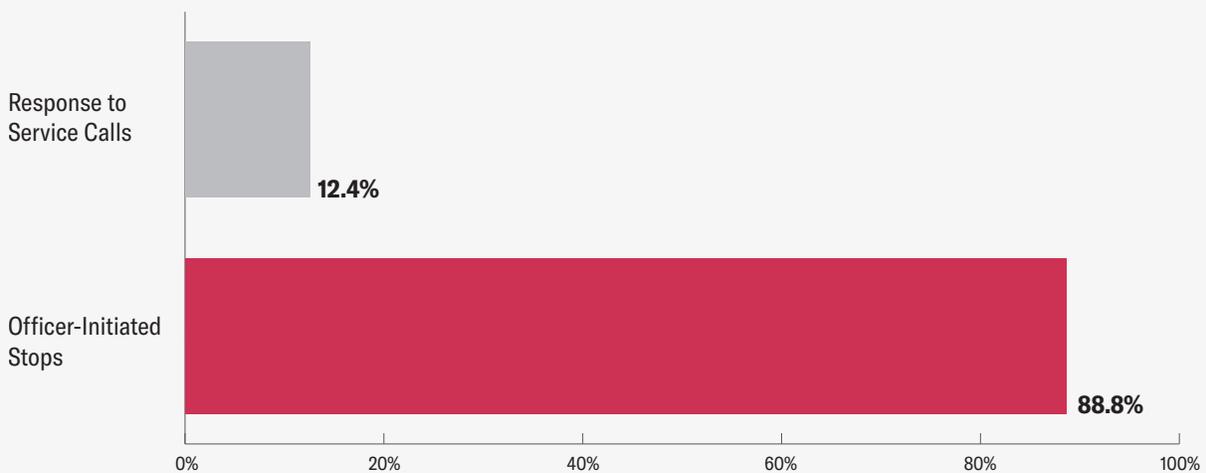
### RCSD's Patrol Practices are Wasteful

#### Most of RCSD's Time is Spent in Deputy-Initiated Traffic Stops

In the media, the Sheriff's Department pushes the narrative that having deputies on the street is necessary to protect the public from violence, which in turn justifies the Department's requests for greater funding.<sup>19</sup> However, the data shows that this narrative does not reflect the reality of how RCSD spends its time, and correspondingly, its budget. The vast majority of the time deputies spend stopping members of the public is devoted to contact *deputies themselves* initiate: 87.6%. Only 12.4% of RCSD deputies' time is spent on calls for service.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the time RCSD deputies spend on deputy-initiated interactions is in response to traffic violations—not, for example, interceding to stop violent crime, as the RCSD suggests. *A whopping 92% of deputy stops*, totaling 83.7% of deputy time, concern traffic violations.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 1.**  
Percent of Time Spent by RCSD Deputies



Data analysis by Catalyst California. Methodology available in "Reimagining Community Safety in California," (Catalyst California & ACLU SoCal October 2022).

To the extent RCSD uses traffic enforcement as an entry point to investigate offenses it deems more serious, this strategy is a failure. Pretext stops “occur[] when an officer stops a person ostensibly for a traffic violation or minor infraction but with the actual intention of using the stop to investigate based on an officer’s hunch that by itself would not amount to reasonable suspicion or probable cause.”<sup>22</sup> Police often justify their excessive use of pretextual stops for minor violations on the theory that this is an effective means to identify more serious criminal conduct.

But the data shows this is wrong. In reality, extremely few of these stops predicated on minor infractions result in arrests for anything more serious. In Riverside, *less than one percent* of people stopped for traffic violations are arrested.<sup>23</sup>

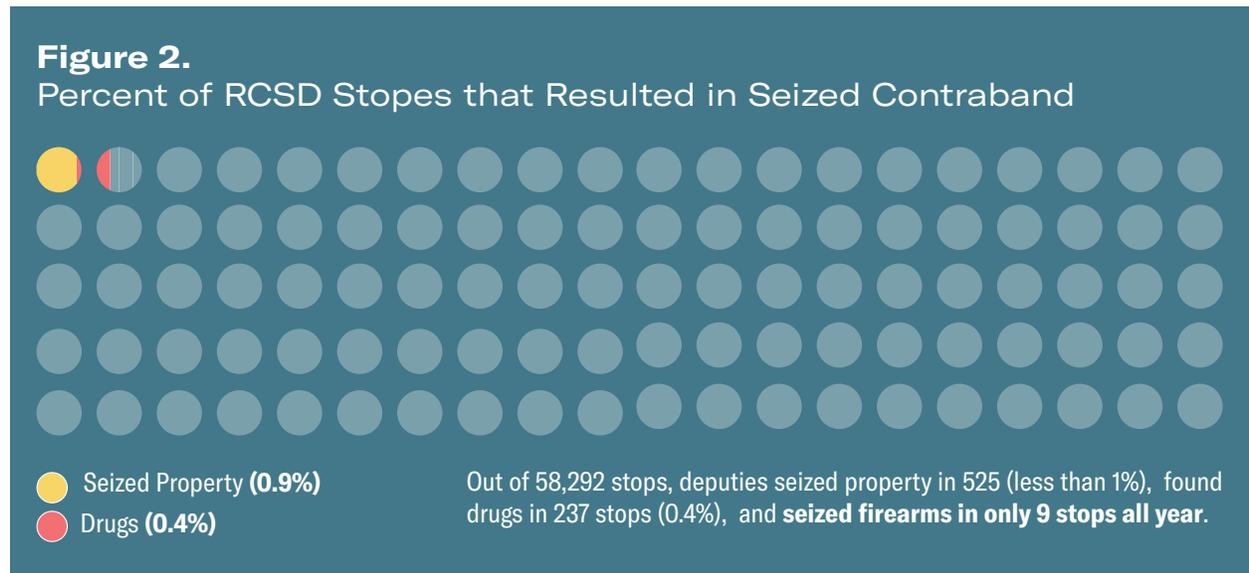
Nearly 20% of traffic stops result in either no action at all or a warning, and 75% of these stops result in simply a traffic citation.<sup>24</sup>

Nor are RCSD deputies finding large numbers of contraband or weapons through these pretext stops—or, indeed, in any stops. For example, deputies searched the person they detained in just 2.1% of all stops.<sup>25</sup> Out of 58,292 stops, deputies seized property in 525 (less than 1%),<sup>26</sup> found drugs in 237 stops (0.4%),<sup>27</sup> and seized firearms in *only 9 stops all year*.<sup>28</sup>

The data disproves RCSD’s argument that they must actively engage the public to uncover crime. Instead, the numbers show just what an astounding proportion of deputy time is spent on conduct that infringes on the public’s liberty without any justification at all.

**PRETEXT STOP**

A traffic stop occurring under the guise of a minor traffic violation but that provides deputies an opportunity to investigate an unrelated suspicion.



### The Vast Majority of RCSD Stops are Unrelated to Serious Offenses

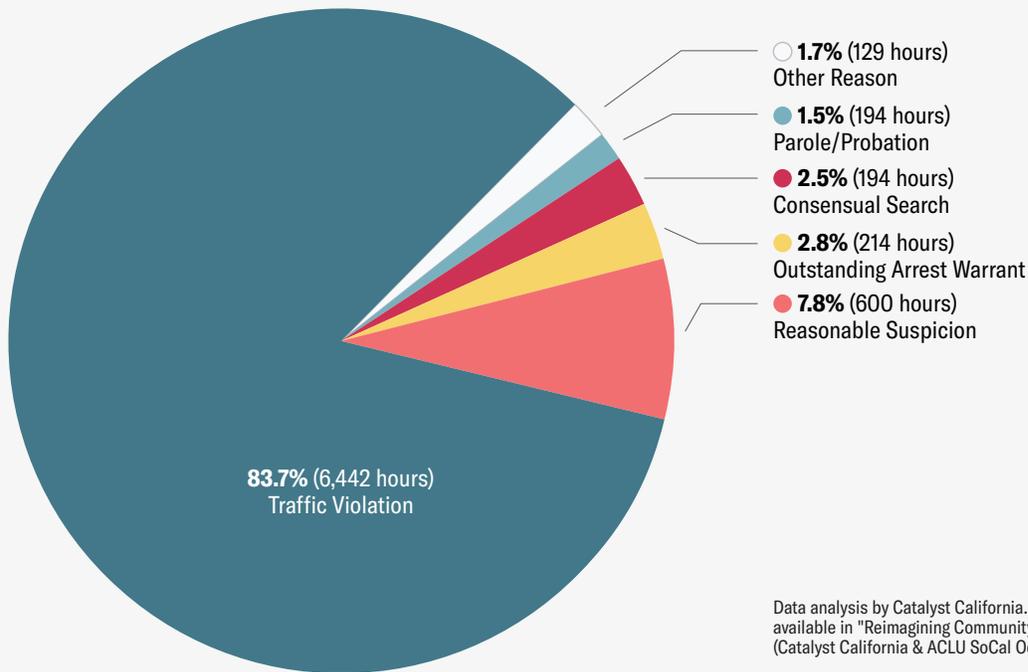
In addition to the failed strategy of “proactive” policing described above, RCSD also purports to respond to alleged crime in the community. But the amount of time RCSD spends on stops where the deputy allegedly has reasonable suspicion<sup>29</sup> that a person is engaged in criminal activity is truly minimal. Overall, reasonable suspicion accounts for *less than 4.7% of all deputy stops*.<sup>30</sup> If we focus on stops initiated by deputies, only 2.7% of those<sup>31</sup>—totaling only 7.8% of deputies’ time<sup>32</sup>—are based on reasonable suspicion.

In other words, when RCSD deputies try to “proactively” address crime by initiating contact with the public,

**just over 3% of stops are based on a deputy’s suspicion that the individual is engaged in criminal activity.**

This means that 97% of the time, RCSD deputies detain someone on their own initiative, they do so without reason to believe the person has acted unlawfully.

**Figure 3.**  
Percent of RCSD Time Spent on All Stops by Reason



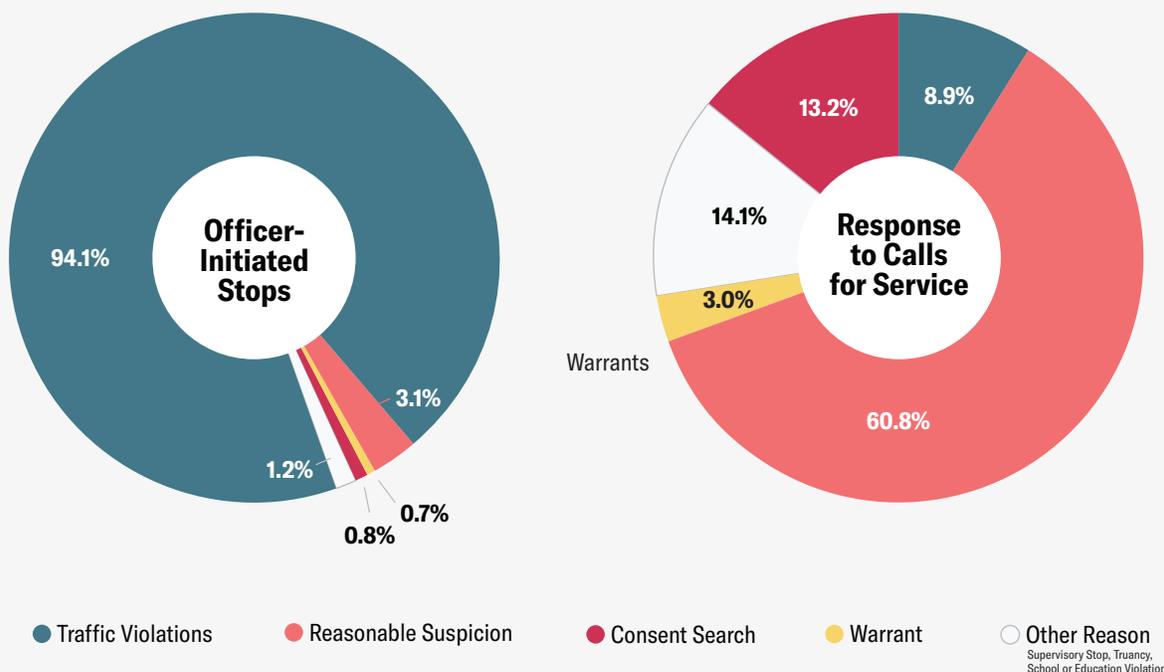
Stops based on reasonable suspicion are more likely to occur in response to actual calls for service from the public rather than when officers initiate the stop themselves. Over 60% of the stops that arise out of a member of the public calling to request deputy assistance are based upon reasonable suspicion.<sup>34</sup> In other words, to the extent RCSD’s goal is to encounter people they reasonably

believe might be engaged in criminal conduct, they are more likely to achieve that aim in the less than 13% of stops that are in response to direct requests for assistance. Their “proactive” crime prevention efforts are *less likely* to result in detecting possible criminal activity than their responses to the much more limited set of public requests for assistance.

**REASONABLE SUSPICION**

A particularized and objective basis for suspecting a person is involved in criminal activity.

**Figure 4.**  
Percent of People Stopped by RCSD by Reason

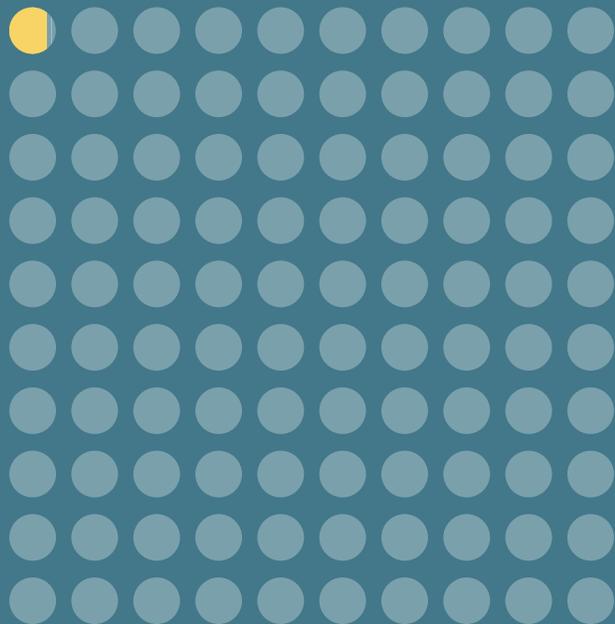


Data analysis by Catalyst California. Methodology available in "Reimagining Community Safety in California," (Catalyst California & ACLU SoCal October 2022).

A closer look at the much smaller fraction of deputy-initiated stops allegedly based upon reasonable suspicion *further* undermines the Department's narrative that deputies primarily stop individuals engaged in serious violent crime. In Riverside County, 81% of people stopped based on a RCSD deputy's reasonable suspicion were for suspected infractions or misdemeanors.<sup>34</sup> An infraction is "a relatively minor violation of law, which cannot result in imprisonment or loss of liberty."<sup>35</sup> Most infractions in California are vehicle code violations, but this category also includes non-traffic behavior like loitering, jaywalking, or sitting down in a public space. In Riverside County, where 7.5% of people stopped for reasonable suspicion were stopped based on a suspected infraction, deputies most frequently stopped people for the infraction of making a loud or unreasonable noise.<sup>36</sup> Misdemeanors, which led to stops for 73.5% of those stopped for reasonable suspicion, are crimes for which the maximum sentence is no more than one year in county jail. And among these misdemeanor stops, the most common suspected violations were trespassing and disorderly conduct.<sup>37</sup>

Only 18.1% of all people RCSD stopped based on reasonable suspicion were stopped based on conduct that could be classified as a felony.<sup>38</sup> So, of the 4.7% of people stopped based on reasonable suspicion, only 18.1% were for crimes that could result in anything more than a fine or one year in county jail. Stated differently, of the 58,292 total stops that RCSD reported in 2019, only 487 of them—or less than *one percent* of stops—were for suspicion of a crime that is classified as a felony.

**Figure 5.**  
Percent of Stops



**Less than 1% (487 stops) of total stops in 2019 (58,292 stops) were for suspicion of a crime that is classified as a felony.**

Even these tiny numbers give the Department too much credit: that 487 stops, less than 1% of deputies' stops, are based on *reasonable suspicion* of a felony does not mean that each of these stops *actually involves* serious offenses.<sup>39</sup> The officer may be wrong: there may be no crime occurring at all. In fact, only around 31% of all stops based on reasonable suspicion result in an arrest—a number that includes the nearly 6% of reasonable suspicion stops that result in an arrest pursuant to an *existing* warrant, and are thus likely to be unrelated to the conduct that led to the stop. In contrast 28% of reasonable suspicion stops resulted in no action and 24% in only a verbal warning.<sup>40</sup> This strongly suggests that a deputy's initial assessment that a crime was occurring was, in fact, wrong.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, of all RCSD's 58,292 stops in 2019, only 3.6% led to an arrest. More than 96% of the instances where a person was stopped and temporarily detained by deputies led, at most, to a ticket.<sup>42</sup> This again undermines the Sheriff Department's narrative that they must insert themselves into the community via low-level stops to uncover serious crime.

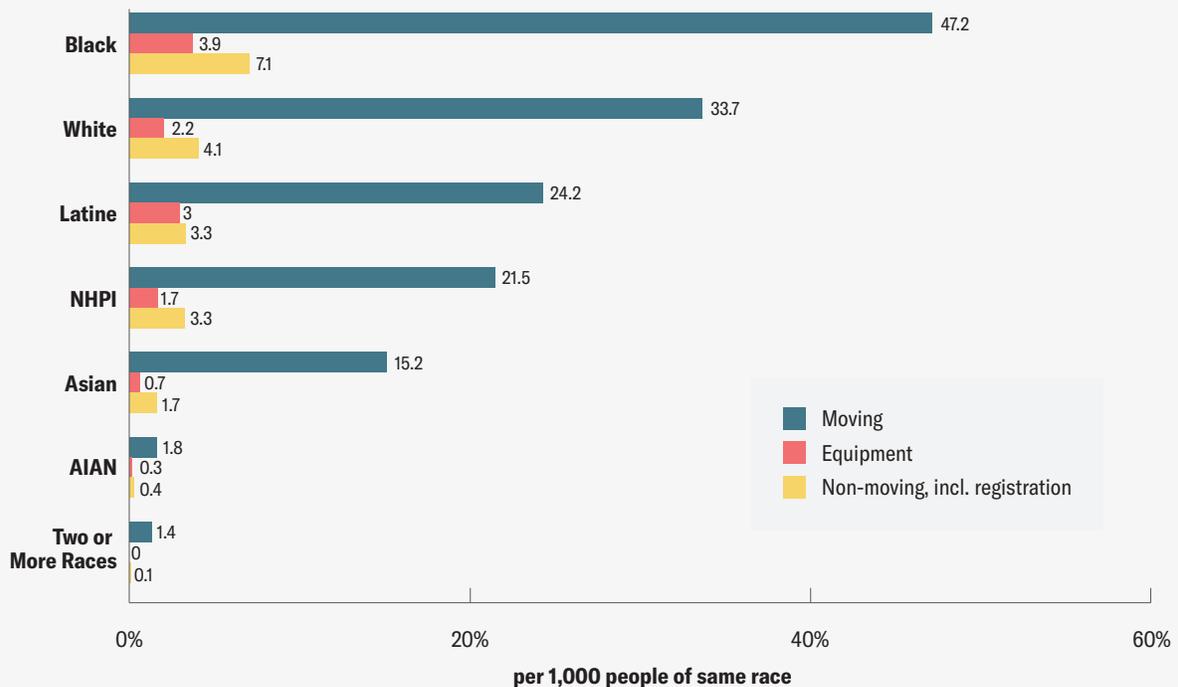
## RCSD'S Patrol Practices are Racially Biased—Especially Against Black People in Riverside County

**Black people in Riverside are policed at higher rates than any other racial group across all categories of police activity.**

They experience the highest stop rates across stops for traffic violations, reasonable suspicion, consensual encounters, and searches. For example, RCSD stopped over 58 Black individuals per 1,000 for traffic violations, versus approximately 40 white individuals per 1,000.<sup>43</sup>

And while all groups are overwhelmingly stopped for alleged traffic infractions, Black people in Riverside County are targeted for non-moving violations, *i.e.* technical or equipment violations, at a higher rate than other groups. While white people were stopped at a rate of 6 out of 1,000 for moving violations, Black people were stopped 34 out of every 1,000 Black people residing in the county for moving violations.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 6.**  
Stop Rates by Race and Stop Reason



As further discussed on page 19, the data on stops involving Latine individuals likely obscures the extent to which Latine people are stopped by LASD deputies. Data analysis by Catalyst California. Methodology available in "Reimagining Community Safety in California," (Catalyst California & ACLU SoCal October 2022).

## Riverside County Devotes a Massive Portion of its Budget to RCSD's Policing of Traffic and Minor Infractions

In Fiscal Year 2019-2020, Riverside County allocated \$795,311,294 of its \$6.7 billion budget—more than 11%—to RCSD.<sup>45</sup> Forty-nine percent of that budget, or \$392,991,903, went to RCSD's patrol unit, whose 2,051 full-time employees conduct the vast majority of the Department's stops.<sup>46</sup>

For this report, we considered the cost to the County of the patrol division alongside the proportion of time that RCSD deputies spend policing traffic and other minor offenses. This permits us to estimate how much each of the Department's practices discussed above costs the County. This estimate assumes that the share of stop time devoted to a particular issue is the same as that practice's share of total patrol costs.<sup>47</sup> It is likely to be conservative, because it does not account for costs incurred outside of the patrol division, such as time spent by those outside of the patrol division for duties triggered by stops or arrests made by patrol deputies.

As stated above, over 87% of deputies' time is spent on stops they initiate.<sup>48</sup> A little over 83% of deputy time is spent on traffic.<sup>49</sup> Using a one-to-one correlation between budget and patrol time estimates, an equivalent proportion—83%—of the RCSD patrol budget is \$326 million.<sup>50</sup> While there is no way to definitively allocate each dollar spent by RCSD to a specific practice or

outcome, this \$326 million is a rough estimate of what the County spends to allow the Department to conduct its massive traffic enforcement effort.

Another way to conceptualize the costs of RCSD's policing practices is to consider the total amount the Department—or more narrowly the patrol division—requires to operate, and to compare those costs with the results obtained. RCSD does not assert that the primary purpose of its deputies is to patrol traffic; to the contrary, it argues that its value is in protecting the public from serious crime. But consider that out of more than 58,000 total stops by deputies, less than 500 involved stops of individuals that deputies even *suspected* of committing any activity that could be classified a felony.<sup>51</sup> If RCSD's purpose is to address potentially serious crime and it requires more than \$392 million dollars for patrol officers to make 487 stops on suspicion of felony activity, then averaged across the patrol division budget each felony stop costs more than \$806,964.<sup>52</sup> The actual cost to the County of each of these stops may be even greater. If RCSD asks the County for \$795,311,294 to function for one year, and in exchange for that, deputies make 487 stops that may involve possible felony-level activity, the cost the County incurs is actually over \$1.6 million for each of these stops.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, the proportional cost to the County for RCSD to locate and remove the nine firearms it recovered over a single year averages to more than \$43 million per firearm—and that’s if we consider *only* the cost of the patrol division.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, in Fiscal Year 2020-2021 the County allocated \$88,611,984 to Housing, Homelessness Prevention, and Workforce Solutions—about what it invested in recovering two guns.<sup>55</sup>

## The Costs to Riverside County for RCSD's Practices Extend Beyond the Patrol Budget

The numbers above are stark, but they *still* fail to fully capture the extent of the County's investment in RCSD's policing of traffic infractions and minor offenses. For instance, beyond patrol costs, for every stop that results in an arrest, the County incurs additional charges, such as booking fees and a daily maintenance cost for all people detained. The 2020-2021 County budget also allocated approximately \$273,389,317 to fund its corrections operation for one year.<sup>56</sup>

**RCSD deputies often cost County residents significantly more than just the cost of their paychecks. In 2019, Riverside County spent at least \$12,321,200 on judgments and settlements arising from litigation against the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, with an additional \$3,183,347 on litigation costs related to these cases.<sup>57</sup>**

In 2020, those numbers were \$4,644,430 and \$3,855,747 respectively.<sup>58</sup> The County was additionally responsible for litigation expenses, paying legal counsel to defend RCSD deputies in these suits. These costs—which have not lessened between 2019 and the present—are often directly tied to deputies' behavior on patrol.

Putting these costs in the context of RCSD's policing practices, which largely amount to traffic stops unrelated to serious criminal activity, demonstrates the wastefulness of investing hundreds of millions of dollars into RCSD as a means of preventing or responding to serious criminal activity or advancing public safety.

## Communities Bear Additional Economic, Physical, Psychological, and Social Costs of Policing

The error of this approach to community safety—devoting billions of dollars to police conduct that is, at best, tangentially related to the safety concerns that RCSD purports to address—is most apparent when we consider the myriad harms incurred by those who are the subject of these policing activities. In addition, while RCSD and other policing agencies often defend their practices as integral to *increasing* public safety, the ironic reality is that their tactics have been shown to have a direct negative effect on various measures of well-being, including an increased likelihood of future involvement in criminal activities. As a result, RCSD’s “proactive” policing may actually be responsible for *decreasing* the public’s safety and overall public health.

Individuals experience acute physical and psychological harm from policing. We would be remiss not to mention that from 2019-2020, RCSD reportedly shot at people 41 times.<sup>59</sup> In 31 out of 41 cases the victim was not perceived to be carrying a firearm.<sup>60</sup> Even though Los Angeles County has four times as many residents as Riverside, in 2019 RCSD closely followed the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department in the number of fatal shootings by deputies.<sup>61</sup> In 2021, RCSD deputies killed 14 people, its deadliest year in a decade.<sup>62</sup>

Attorney General Bonta expressly noted “deeply concerning allegations” relating to RCSD’s “excessive force” as one of his Department’s motivations in opening its investigation into RCSD.<sup>63</sup>

In Riverside County, a deputy encounter also puts individuals at risk of landing in RCSD’s custody—and therefore, in some of the deadliest jails in the state. The County’s “concerning levels of in-custody deaths,”<sup>64</sup> in the words of Attorney General Bonta, peaked in 2022, when 18 inmates (most of whom were legally innocent, detained pretrial) died in jail.<sup>65</sup> These deaths are the subject of a lawsuit detailing the deplorable unconstitutional conditions in the jails.<sup>66</sup> Spending any time in these facilities risks immeasurable harm.

Even when an encounter with RCSD does not culminate in deadly force—or involve any force at all—it can still have a lasting detrimental effect on the individual’s mental and psychological wellbeing.

**Studies show that people subject to policing show an increase in sleep deprivation, social stigma, and post-traumatic stress.<sup>67</sup>**

People who have more police contact also experience greater anxiety and display more signs of trauma, with more frequent and more intrusive stops resulting in even higher anxiety and greater frequency of PTSD symptoms.<sup>68</sup>

These effects are especially stark for Black Riverside County residents. Scholars studying the public health effects of racially discriminatory policing have observed a wide range of negative impacts on Black Americans, including injuries arising from violent confrontations and adverse health consequences caused by experiencing perceived threats or vicarious harm.<sup>69</sup> A study of Black individuals confirmed that merely seeing police leads to increased anxiety, and that police encounters correlate to increases in anxiety, distress, depression, and trauma.<sup>70</sup> Black people who “experience police mistreatment are at increased risk of a range of negative psychological effects, including higher levels of suicidal ideation, paranoia, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress, as well as negative physiological effects including premature aging and cardiovascular disease.”<sup>71</sup> The more “assaultive” a police encounter is (i.e., whether the contact led to physical violence, harassment, or neglect), the more intense and longer-lasting the psychological consequences on the individual will be.<sup>72</sup>

The protective steps individuals take to avoid negative and unnecessary police encounters such as being stopped or questioned when merely standing in a public place or being pushed or having a gun pointed at them by an officer—also cause harm. For instance, a study of young Black men aged 18 to 44 demonstrated that when individuals force themselves to alter their routines or engage in protective conduct to avoid police contact, such as not going outside or not traveling in a car with male friends, it increased their likelihood of experiencing symptoms associated with depression.<sup>73</sup> Thus, even when not actively being stopped by police, the pervasiveness of police stops and the fear of future harassment has a deleterious effect on the mental health of the Black people who are frequently and disproportionately the subject of police action, and who live in communities where these actions are common.<sup>74</sup>

**Aggressive, or “proactive,” police tactics impact the social fabric of the community and the wellbeing of community members.**

A study of New York residents during the stop-and-frisk era concluded that the city’s culture of police surveillance was a public health issue because it created a community-wide high-stress environment and led to decreased community activities.<sup>75</sup> Another study focused on a Baltimore neighborhood with high arrest rates found that police presence

contributes to community fragmentation and leads to worse health outcomes within communities.<sup>76</sup> Residents described the chilling effect that police presence in their neighborhood had on community activities, dissuading them from spending time in public places.<sup>77</sup> This fragmentation causes chronic stress and is associated with poor health outcomes on a community level.<sup>78</sup>

Further, communities that are aggressively policed show greater levels of distress—both as a result of the hypervigilance expended in an attempt to avoid being targeted and because such treatment is observed and experienced by the community as unfair or discriminatory.<sup>79</sup> Communities with higher rates of stops and searches and uses of force display higher levels of non-specific psychological distress (including feelings of nervousness and worthlessness), especially among men.<sup>80</sup> Communities with high incarceration rates also show higher levels of depression, anxiety, and asthma.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, the effect of police stops may be even more significant for youth. “Such encounters are pivotal life events that can have repercussions for the mental health of the stopped youth . . . [and] [t]he stress related to police stops may even exacerbate pre-existing stress and can be particularly elevated in cases where stops are violent, intrusive and/or result in physical injury. Moreover, individuals subjected to police officer

intrusiveness during a previous encounter may fear being stopped again at a later point, thereby prolonging stress related to the anticipation of future stops.”<sup>82</sup> Both vicarious and direct exposure to police stops were associated with sleep deprivation and low sleep quality for youth, which are both significant hazards to adolescent health and development and linked to depression, obesity, and heightened risk-taking, as well as delinquency.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, another study observed that actual delinquent behavior was less likely to predict future delinquency than was being stopped by the police.<sup>84</sup> In other words, “prior law-abiding behaviors did not protect boys against future police stops, yet being stopped by police was associated with increased engagement in delinquent behavior.”<sup>85</sup> The study found that in part because of the psychological stress caused by the stop, as well as the practical effect of being “labeled” criminal by the act of being stopped by police, these stops actually contributed to future delinquent behavior rather than prevented it.

Arrests, unsurprisingly, can have additional negative effects on an individual’s well-being. People face costly financial harm as a result of their contact with the police, in addition to devastating psychological harms. There are several measures of the economic costs to individuals who are arrested and detained—even pre-trial—or incarcerated. For instance, one

study estimates that detained people lose income at a rate of \$85 per day.<sup>86</sup> Additionally, 23% of individuals detained based on a misdemeanor charge will lose approximately \$1,565 because of forfeited or new deposits for housing as a result of their detention.<sup>87</sup>

**Crucially, these costs are often incurred regardless of whether the individual is actually convicted, or even charged.**

Losses persist even beyond the length of a person's detention: studies demonstrate that having an arrest over the course of a person's lifetime "dims the employment prospects more than any other employment-related characteristic," with employers significantly less likely to hire an individual who admitted to any criminal justice involvement, whether it was spending time in prison or jail, currently being under supervised release, or simply ever having been arrested, regardless of outcome.<sup>88</sup> Individuals who have spent time in prison suffer significant economic harm, with their annual earnings reduced by an average of 52%, but even those who are convicted of misdemeanors—violations that cannot possibly result in incarceration over one year and in many cases lead to no incarceration at all—will still see their annual earnings reduced by an average of 16%.<sup>89</sup> Further, past incarceration was found to reduce an employed individual's annual employment by 9 weeks.<sup>90</sup> Black and Latine people experience these economic consequences even more

acutely. One survey found that formerly incarcerated Black and Latine workers saw wage reduction at *twice the rate of white people*.<sup>91</sup>

These losses continue far into the future: according to one survey, more than 60% of formerly incarcerated people remain unemployed even one year after release, 26% after 5 years.<sup>92</sup> Only 40% were working full time after 5 years of release.<sup>93</sup>

Finally, contact with the criminal-legal system can have devastating consequences on immigrants. Certain arrests and convictions can make immigrants ineligible for permanent residency or citizenship and can place them in the deportation pipeline. For example, the Riverside Sheriff's Department transferred 88 people in 2018 and 48 people in 2019 from the county jails to ICE custody upon completion of their sentences.<sup>94</sup> These intertwined systems work a cruel double punishment on community members who face immigration consequences in addition to all the other harm stemming from their arrests.

**In sum, the cost of aggressive policing tactics, including RCSD's "proactive" strategy of conducting thousands of low-level stops in hopes of discovering more serious crime, must include the impact to the individual and community that results from being the subject of these policing activities.**

**As the County develops its annual budget, we urge the Board of Supervisors not to continue to waste billions on the ineffective and harmful RCSD.**

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Riverside County Sheriff's Department wastes billions of County dollars harassing Riverside County residents—especially Black people—via deputy-initiated traffic stops. Contrary to the popular narrative that law enforcement keeps communities safe from violent crime, RCSD overwhelmingly targets community members on suspicion of, at most, traffic violations or infractions and misdemeanors.

The Department's time allocation and clearance rates demonstrate that it does not prioritize responding to community members' actual requests for help or solving more serious crimes. And the costs of policing do not stop with RCSD's already-massive budget. They also include expenses incurred by other County actors like the District Attorney's and Public Defender's Offices. Other costs include maintenance of the County jail system where people arrested for minor violations are housed; settlements arising from deputy misconduct during stops; and the mental, physical, and financial harms disproportionately inflicted on people and communities that are policed. In this way, RCSD's policing practices are not just wasteful, they are actively harmful—they waste County dollars while damaging the financial, physical, social, and psychological health of residents. They leave the County unable to fully fund the supportive services needed to address those harms.

**As the County develops its annual budget, we urge the Board of Supervisors not to continue to waste billions on the ineffective and harmful RCSD.**

Instead, the County should invest in services and infrastructure that can directly and meaningfully improve the quality of life and safety of Riverside residents.

Studies have shown that a reduction in policing budgets primarily impacts an agency's ability to devote substantial hours to the unproductive policing activities that constitute the bulk of RCSD patrol deputies' time.<sup>95</sup> As policing agencies receive more money, they arrest more people for low-level offenses; as their budgets shrink, they make fewer misdemeanor arrests, without a significant impact on felony arrests.<sup>96</sup> A public safety approach that increases contacts with the criminal legal system—including by facilitating stops, searches, and misdemeanor arrests—actually **increases** crime. A true investment in community safety requires funding strategies that prioritize health services and minimize contact between law enforcement and the public.<sup>97</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The County should dramatically reduce the funding spent on RCSD. It should invest instead in the services and structures that meet community- and individual-level needs *prior* to any engagement with the criminal legal system. It should fund non-law-enforcement first-response programs proven to keep people safe. And it should seek additional input from advocates, organizations, communities of color, and professionals who have identified more productive uses of the County's finite budget. These necessary reinvestments include:

- 1 Removing traffic enforcement functions from law enforcement and placing authority instead with civilian county employees.**
  - Any remaining traffic enforcement should be vested with civilian employees to the extent possible.
- 2 Removing deputies' authority to stop individuals not engaged in activities that pose a significant threat to public safety.**
  - This includes decriminalizing bicycling activities and equipment violations, as well as violations related to camping and loitering in public spaces.
- 3 Addressing public health needs with trained and well-resourced experts, not law enforcement.**
  - This includes empowering non-law-enforcement specialists to address social issues (like homelessness, mental illness, and addiction) currently under the ambit of RCSD.
- 4 Supporting the California Department of Justice's ongoing investigation into RCSD.**
  - This includes cooperating fully and proactively with investigators and, ultimately, working to implement and enforce any orders or recommendations the Department may issue.
- 5 Supporting community members' request for a state legislative audit on funding and spending practices for RCSD.**
  - This includes providing formal support for the initiation of an audit and ongoing participation with any requests from lawmakers in connection with any audit.

## IV. ENDNOTES

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- 4 Press Release, “Attorney General Bonta Launches Civil Rights Investigation into Riverside County Sheriff’s Office,” February 23, 2023, *available at* <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-launches-civil-rights-investigation-riverside-county>.
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- 9 *Id.*
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- 11 *Id.*
- 12 Reimagining Community Safety, p. 18.
- 13 *Id.*
- 14 Reimagining Community Safety, p. 11.
- 15 County of Riverside, Fiscal Year 2020-2021, Adopted Budget, p. 34, *available at* <https://rivco.org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/About%20the%20County/Budget%20and%20Financial%20Information/Financial%20Information/FY-20-21/FY20-21 Adopted Budget Volume 1.pdf> (last visited May 19, 2023).
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- 17 See Reimagining Community Safety, pp. 27-28.

- 18 This report uses the term “people of color” to encompass the non-white racial categories as designated in the 2015 Racial and Identity Profiling Act and its implementing regulations, at pp. 6-7, available at <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/ripa/stop-data-reg-final-text-110717.pdf>. Based upon these regulations, the term specifically encompasses those identified as: Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino(a), Middle Eastern or South Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander.
- 19 See, e.g., Tom Coulter, “Board moves closer to approving Riverside County budget, with an additional \$27 million in spending,” Desert Sun. June 14, 2022, available at: <https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2022/06/14/board-oks-27-million-more-spending-riverside-county-budget/7629720001/>.
- 20 Reimagining Community Safety, p. 14.
- 21 ACLU SoCal RIPA Analysis.
- 22 Racial and Identity Profiling Act Advisory Board, 2022 Annual Report, p. 13, available at: <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ripa-board-report-2022.pdf> [hereinafter 2022 RIPA Report].
- 23 ACLU SoCal RIPA Analysis.
- 24 *Id.*
- 25 *Id.*
- 26 *Id.*
- 27 *Id.*
- 28 *Id.*
- 29 “Reasonable suspicion” in this context refers to the legal standard that must be met under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution for an officer to require a member of the public to submit to a stop to allow an officer to investigate potential criminal activity. “Reasonable suspicion is defined as a particularized and objective basis for suspecting a person is involved in criminal activity,” and therefore should require an officer to be able to point to specific, objective facts about the circumstances that suggest criminal activity. *People v. Parrott*, 10 Cal.App.5th 485, 494-95 (2017) (internal citations and quotation marks omitted). This is a lower standard than the “probable cause” standard that is required to justify an arrest.
- 30 ACLU SoCal RIPA Analysis.
- 31 *Id.*
- 32 Reimagining Community Safety, p. 16.
- 33 *Id.*
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- 35 *People v. Kus*, 219 Cal.App.4th Supp.17, 21 (2013). For further discussion of non-traffic infractions and the impact they have on individuals cited, see Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of the

San Francisco Bay Area, “Cited for Being in Plain Sight: How California Polices Being Black, Brown, and Unhoused in Public,” September 2020, *available at* [https://lccrsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/LCCR\\_CA\\_Infraction\\_report\\_4WEB-1.pdf](https://lccrsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/LCCR_CA_Infraction_report_4WEB-1.pdf).

36 ACLU SoCal RIPA Analysis.

37 *Id.*

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39 *Id.* This includes all stops where deputies provided a single outcome for the stop, and does not include a small number of incidents where deputies included multiple, sometimes-conflicting, outcomes.

40 *Id.*

41 *Id.*

42 *Id.*

43 Catalyst California RIPA Analysis.

44 *Id.*

45 County of Riverside, Fiscal Year 2020-2021, Adopted Budget, *available at* [https://rivco.org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/About%20the%20County/Budget%20and%20Financial%20Information/Financial%20Information/FY-20-21/FY20-21\\_Adopted\\_Budget\\_Volume\\_1.pdf](https://rivco.org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/About%20the%20County/Budget%20and%20Financial%20Information/Financial%20Information/FY-20-21/FY20-21_Adopted_Budget_Volume_1.pdf) (last visited May 19, 2023).

46 Reimagining Community Safety, p. 11.

47 Patrol costs are calculated to include the direct costs of patrol duty officers as well as indirect costs for administration, supervision, and other tasks that make patrol operational, as reflected in the Riverside County budget. *See* Reimagining Community Safety, p. 14.

48 *Id.* at 15.

49 *Id.* at 17.

50 *Id.*

51 ACLU SoCal RIPA Analysis.

52 *Id.*

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55 County of Riverside, Fiscal Year 2020-2021, Adopted Budget, p. 34, *available at* <https://rivco.org>.

[org/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/About%20the%20County/Budget%20and%20Financial%20Information/Financial%20Information/FY-20-21/FY20-21 Adopted Budget Volume 1.pdf](https://www.riversidecounty.net/sites/g/files/aldnop116/files/About%20the%20County/Budget%20and%20Financial%20Information/Financial%20Information/FY-20-21/FY20-21 Adopted Budget Volume 1.pdf) (last visited May 19, 2023).

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- 57 Figures based on documents provided by the Riverside County Office of County Counsel in response to a public record act request filed by the ACLU of Southern California.
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